

The combined might of rebels, crew members, and the repaired *Weatherlight* inflicts heavy damage to the hangar and the Mercadian-goblin army. Though the prophecies come true and the rebels are victorious, the crew's mood is not jubilant. Volrath has escaped once again, and Gerrard has learned that Mercadia is not the only such staging ground with similar war machines. With the vast scale of the invasion now evident, the *Weatherlight* heads home, bound for Dominaria and pledged to protect it.

Illus. rk post and Heather Hudson



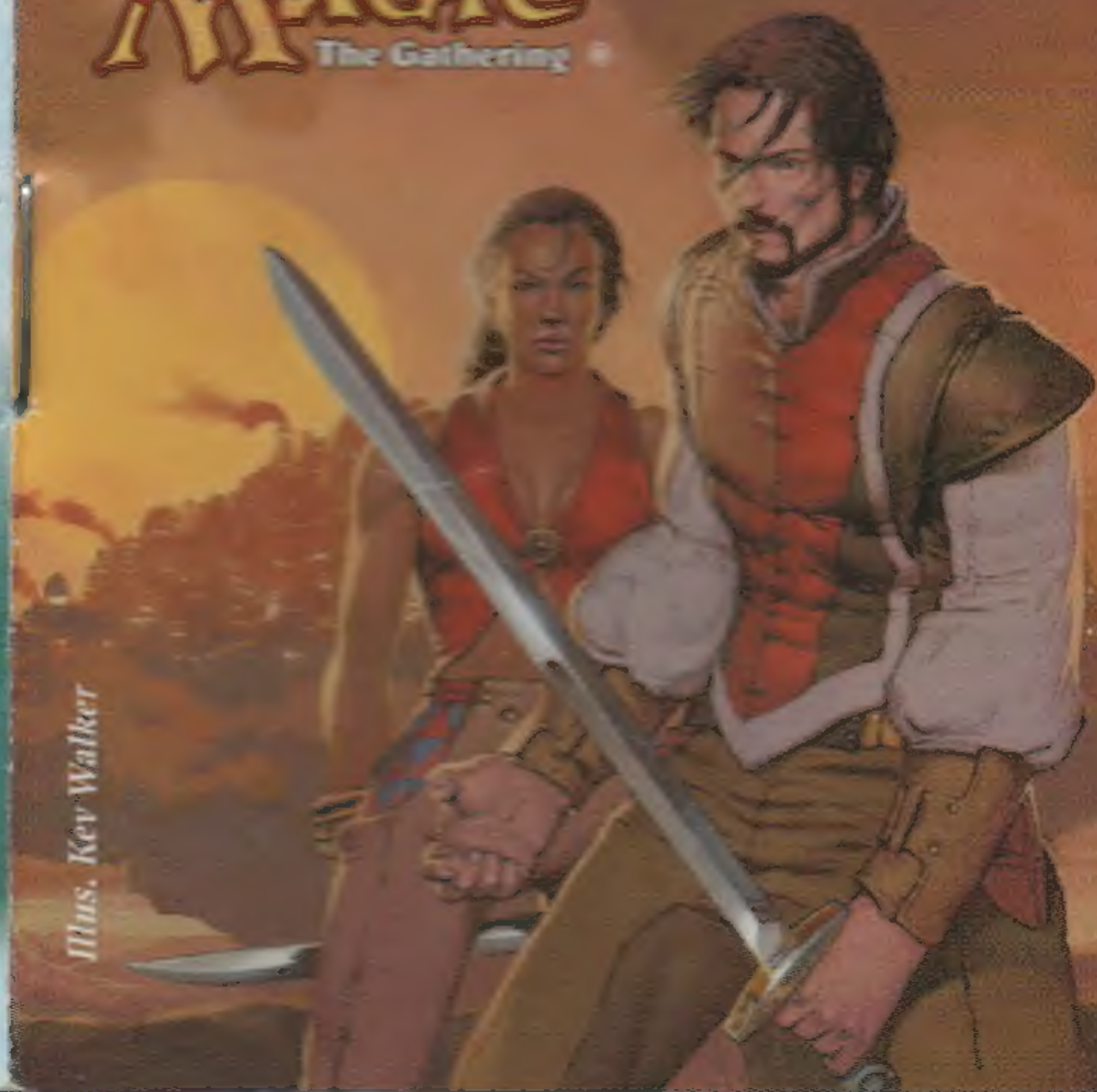
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Mercadian Masques™

MAGIC

The Gathering

Illus. Kev Walker



The *Weatherlight's* troubles continue as it crash-lands on a strange new plane. When most of the crew disembarks to assess the damage, the ship is promptly attacked by raiders from a tribe called the *Cho-Arrim*, who steal the ship. Finally, soldiers from the capital city of Mercadia arrive to arrest the beleaguered crew.

After a forced march, the crew arrives in Mercadia City, which sits atop an inverted mountain where all the important trade routes meet. This city's layout is twisted and surreal: to go left, you

must turn right, then right again. Inside the city Gattard and the crew take advantage of the crowds to fight their way free.

Meanwhile, Orim, who was captured with the ship, learns more about her captives. The *Cho-Arrim* are spiritual people who suffer greatly under the greedy Mercadians. Their leader Cho-Manno explains that he took the *Weatherlight's* arrival as a sign prophesying the return of the sky god Ramos and the end of Mercadian rule. Orim slowly becomes sympathetic to the *Cho-Arrim's* situation and attracted to their leader.

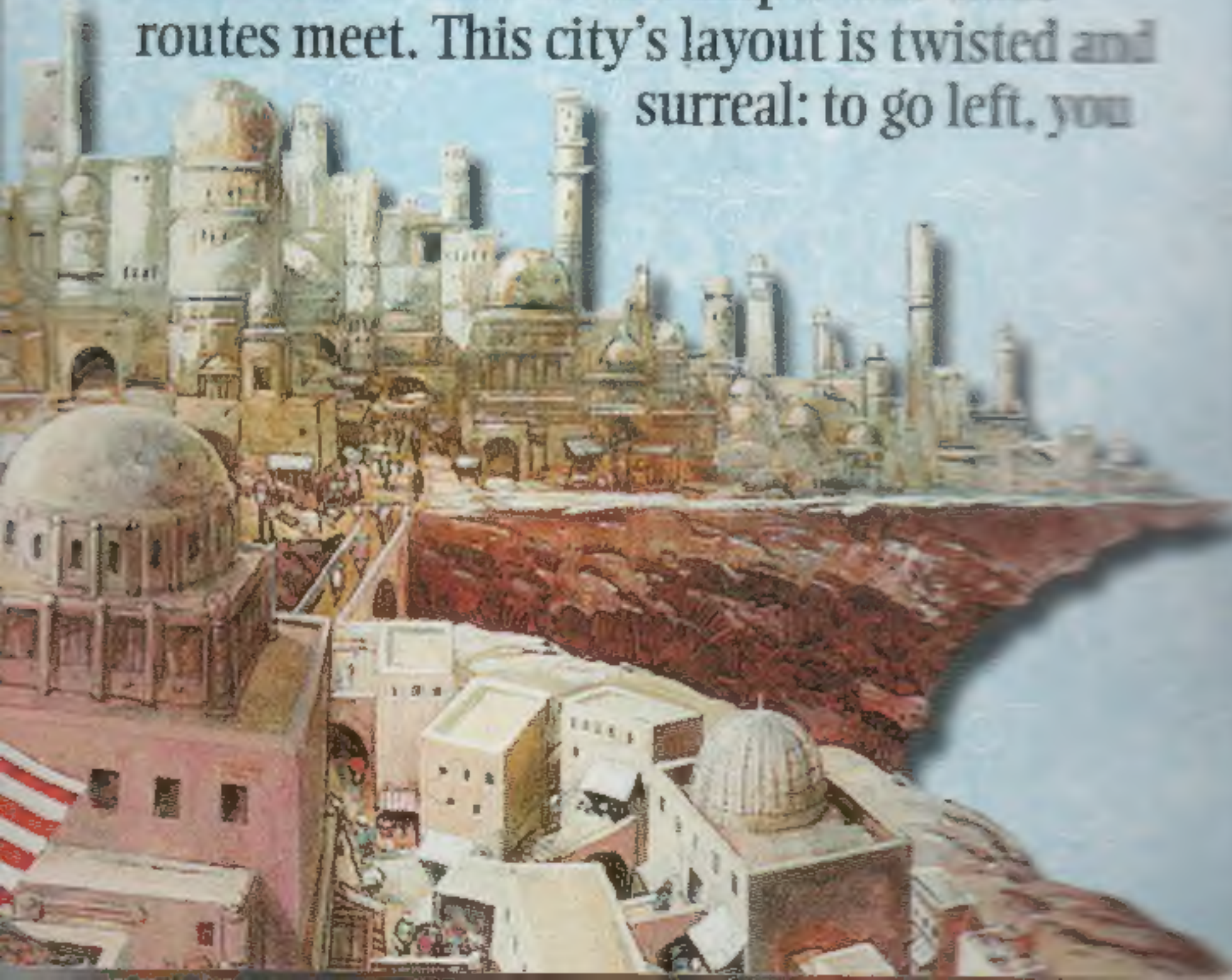


Illustration by David Johnson and David Johnson



The *Weatherlight* crew regroups and makes contact with the rulers of Mercadia City. Mercadians are an evasive, aloof people: the nobles are hedonistic, apathetic, and lazy, while the commoners are selfish, grasping, and paranoid. Mercadian goblins are much larger and smarter than any the crew has encountered before, and they actually seem to be running the city despite their servile attitudes. Furthermore, a guild of professional assassins and thieves called Caterans roams the back alleys of the marketplace, ready to terrorize or murder anyone for the right price.



Illus. Jeff Easley and Terese Nielsen



After consulting with his goblin handlers, the Mercadian magistrate unexpectedly offers Gerrard an unusual deal. A platoon of soldiers and Cateran mercenaries will be placed under his command to recover the *Weatherlight*. If the mission is successful, Gerrard may petition for both the return of his ship and safe passage out of Mercadia for himself and his crew. Suspicious of the magistrate's motives, Gerrard accepts the bargain anyway, drills the undisciplined platoon into a passable military unit, and marches for Cho-Arrim territory.



In the ensuing battle, the troops successfully retake the *Weatherlight* and reunite Orim with her crewmates, but the violent Caterans slaughter the Cho-Arrim indiscriminately. Gerrard orders the Mercadian troops to stop the Caterans, and they do—but then Gerrard finds himself and his crew under arrest once more for turning Mercadia's soldiers against each other.

Illus. Mike Ploog and Chippy

Back in Mercadia City, Takara brokers a new deal with the magistrate: the crew will repair the damaged *Weatherlight* and restore its flying mechanisms for him in exchange for their freedom. Sisay, Hanna, and Orim will travel to Saprazzo, a rival trade city inhabited by enlightened merfolk with the ability to switch between fish tails and human legs at will. There they will secure an artifact required to fix the ship, while Takara and the male members of the crew remain in captivity. The magistrate agrees, and the crew members are baffled by the deference Mercadian goblins and nobles alike show Takara.

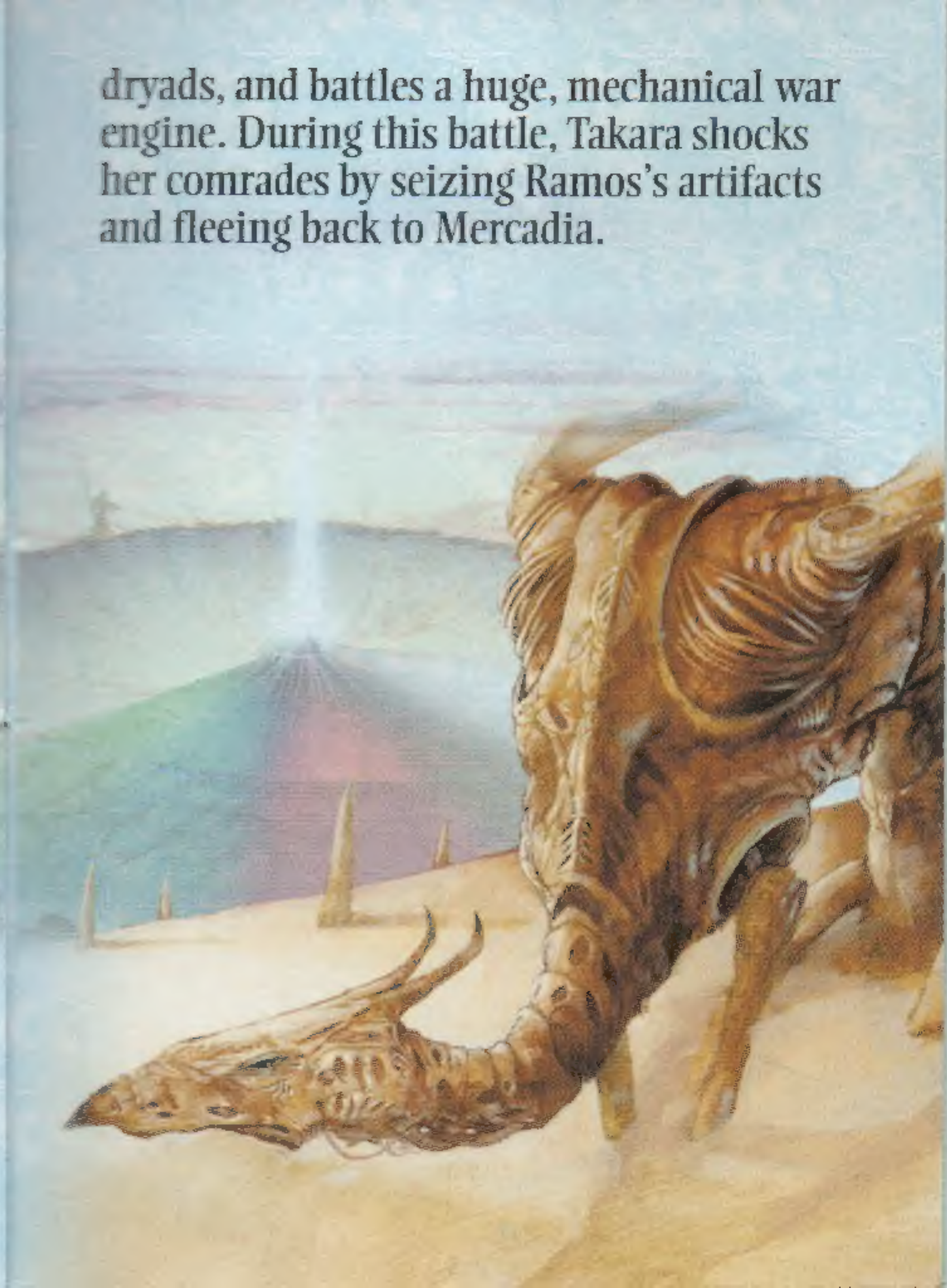


The Saprazzan vizier is hospitable but refuses to allow her people's most treasured artifact out of the city; Saprazzo has its own legends about the return of Ramos and the fall of Mercadia. As the negotiations continue, the artifact is stolen and Orim is framed for the theft. Realizing that the Mercadians have most likely stolen the artifact and left the crew to take the blame, the sympathetic vizier helps Sisay and Hanna return to Mercadia. They assemble the crew, both to recover the Saprazzans' treasure and to repair the ship by obtaining a group of powerful relics believed to be connected to Ramos himself. Later, Orim is cleared of the theft charge and reunited with Cho-Manno.

In Mercadia, Takara engineers the crew's escape. Karn and Hanna head for the *Weatherlight* while the others set off to recover the missing artifacts. Gerrard's band discovers the ruins of an ancient Thran site, encounters a race of powerful

dryads, and battles a huge, mechanical war engine. During this battle, Takara shocks her comrades by seizing Ramos's artifacts and fleeing back to Mercadia.

Illus. Chippy and Edward P. Beard, Jr.





Hot on Takara's heels, the crew discovers an enormous hangar of flying warships, including the *Weatherlight*, hidden below Mercadia City. They realize that Mercadia is a staging area for a full-scale invasion of Dominaria. Inside on the *Weatherlight*, Takara reveals to Karn and Hanna that she is really Volrath, Gerrard's oldest and bitterest enemy. Volrath forces Karn and Hanna to jury-rig Ramos's artifacts into the *Weatherlight*'s engines, intending to steal the ship and strand the crew. As the Cho-Arrim and Saprazzan rebel armies mass and attack Mercadia City, Gerrard arrives and squares off with Volrath.

Illus. Matt Cavotta and Mark Tedin

